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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Amembassy SAIGON

April 5, 1956

TO : The Department of State, Washington

SUBJECT: Foreign Broadcast Information Service Operation, Saigon

The Chief of the Saigon Bureau, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, has asked for our comments on the possible termination of FBIS local services. This request has been occasioned by an FBIS internal study in Washington which is expected to recommend the closing of the Saigon Bureau and the transfer of its coverage to other Bureaus.

The Embassy would find the closing of the FBIS Saigon Bureau highly undesirable since this would presumably result in a delay of at least several days in receiving detailed accounts of items of importance. Likewise, the present overall coverage would probably be reduced substantially.

It should be recalled that since the closing of the United States Consulate in Hanoi last December, the FBIS operation, Saigon, is the Embassy's prime source of fast and comprehensive coverage of events in North Viet Nam. At the present time the Embassy finds the daily FBIS Saigon file quite valuable, particularly the Hanoi and Cambodian radio monitoring. Also of value are the local monitoring (including the clandestine Dai Viet station) and translations of the Hanoi press. The Saigon press survey might eventually be eliminated if it is duplicated by a revised press summary now under consideration by all U.S. agencies at this post.

The following Radio Hanoi items, for example, are of immediate and detailed interest to the Embassy:

1. Texts of Democratic Republic of Viet Nam resolutions or letters on International Control Commission questions.
2. Items forecasting which charges of violations of the Geneva Accords the DRV intends to bring before the ICC.
3. Items giving DRV reactions to events in Free Viet Nam.
4. All other major events in North Viet Nam, DRV policy statements, etc.

Similarly, Phnom Penh radio reports bearing on the present problem of Vietnamese-Cambodian relations are of prime importance to us.

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The existing FBIS service contains another valuable feature. Radio Hanoi comments on a particular question, for example, are often given in French, English and in local languages (Vietnamese, Cambodian, etc.) The present FBIS coverage enables us to compare the slants of these broadcasts which sometimes vary according to the language of transmission.

It might also be mentioned that the FBIS Saigon Bureau has an arrangement whereby items of immediate interest to Phnom Penh and Vientiane are re-transmitted to these posts, which, in the past, have indicated appreciation for this prompt service.

Comments on this subject by the United States Information Service here have been transmitted to USIA, Washington in a separate despatch.

For the Ambassador:

R. D. Gatewood
First Secretary of Embassy

ACTION REQUESTED: The Department is requested to send copies of this despatch to Phnom Penh, Vientiane and FBIS Washington.

Evaluation B. 1.

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